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## Media Release

### **VICTORIA SETTING THE PACE IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING – BUT FOR HOW LONG?**

Victoria leads the nation in the educational attainment of young people and in successful transitions from school, according to the most comprehensive analysis of Victorian education, training and employment outcomes in the State since the election of the Bracks Government in 1999.

Across a number of key measures Victoria is the leader, or close to the lead, in:

- the proportion of teenagers and young adults engaged full-time in learning or work;
- school retention;
- levels of unemployment;
- the proportion of youth 'at risk' in the transition from school;
- post-school participation in vocational education and training (VET); and
- apprenticeship commencements.

Mr Mike Long of Monash University's Centre for the Economics of Education and Training (CEET), the author of the report, said the Government's target to have 90 per cent of young Victorians completing Year 12 or an equivalent qualification by the year 2010 appears achievable.

The Business Council of Australia (BCA), the Education Foundation and the Dusseldorp Skills Forum (DSF), which commissioned the *Setting the Pace* report, welcomed the results but warned that a number of challenges still remain.

Dr John Spierings of the Dusseldorp Skills Forum said, "Victoria has been a longstanding national trailblazer in education and training but there is a danger of being overtaken as other States implement a range of initiatives to boost their education and training outcomes."

Dr Spierings said the reforms introduced by the Bracks Government in 2000 needed to be 'systematically revisited and renewed' if Victoria is to continue setting the pace in education and training.

He said a particular challenge is that Victorian 15-year-olds do less well in achievement tests in mathematics, science and reading relative to their interstate counterparts and that fewer secondary students are doing VET than in other States.

Mr Mike Long of CEET said, “There have been positive effects from the Bracks reforms. In particular, there are more learning options for students, and better tracking and accountability for student destinations.

“However there are high expectations of outcomes and shifts in participation based on relatively small expenditures and initiatives that require greater cohesion and integration”, he said.

The report outlines eight steps to boost the youth participation rate in learning and work in Victoria:

- a legislative guarantee providing all young Victorians with the right to access and have the support necessary to complete Year 12 or an apprenticeship;
- greater investment in literacy and numeracy programs in primary and junior secondary schooling;
- development of the VCAL initiative in the junior and middle years of secondary schooling;
- reduction in barriers to successful VET in schools programs;
- intensive personal support and careers advice for every Victorian early school leaver;
- an integrated system of ‘second chance’ opportunities for early school leavers to achieve Year 12 or an apprenticeship;
- a bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth to ensure integrated planning, research, programs and responsibilities, and pooled resources for youth leaving school early; and
- a review of the youth labour market in Victoria, in particular the trends and policy needs of young adults.

Ms Katie Lahey, Chief Executive of the Business Council of Australia, said a recent report by Access Economics showed the potential economic benefit to Australia of boosting youth education and training completions to 90 per cent by the end of the decade could be nearly \$10 billion (in today’s money) in extra GDP by 2040.

Ms Lahey said that while the *Setting the Pace* report focused on improving retention in Victoria, all States needed to increase the number of people completing an initial 12 years of education and training, including apprenticeships, if Australia is to effectively meet the workforce challenges of an ageing population.

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